

17. (thrice amended) A mutant high alkaline protease produced according to the method of Claim 23 and characterized as (1) substantially free from contamination with an indigenous extracellular high alkaline protease, and (2) differing in at least one amino acid from the indigenous high alkaline protease wherein said mutant maintains capacity to degrade substrate.

19. (twice amended) A detergent composition comprising as an active ingredient one or more high alkaline protease exhibiting altered protease activity prepared according to the method of Claim 23.

23. (twice amended) A method for production of a mutated high alkaline protease exhibiting altered protease activity and substantially free of indigenous extracellular high alkaline protease, said method comprising:

growing an alkalophilic Bacillus strain host having no detectable indigenous extracellular protease as a result of deletion of the gene for indigenous extracellular protease transformed with an expression cassette providing for expression of a said mutant high alkaline protease in said host, whereby said mutant high alkaline protease is produced.

24. (amended) A method for preparing a detergent composition, which comprises the step of combining a detergent composition with, as an active ingredient, one or more of a high alkaline protease exhibiting altered protease activity prepared according to the method of Claim 23.

25. (amended) A method for processing laundry, which comprises the step of contacting said laundry with a detergent composition comprising as an active ingredient one or more of a high alkaline protease exhibiting altered protease activity prepared according to the method of Claim 23.

26. (twice amended) A method for production of a mutated high alkaline protease exhibiting altered protease activity substantially free of indigenous extracellular protease, said method comprising:

growing an asporogenous Bacillus strain host having a reduced indigenous extracellular protease level as a result of